

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, NI

SUBJ: CIVAIR: BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH NIGERIA

REF : A) LAGOS 10018 B) STATE 217036

1. EMBOFF CALLED ON MR. A. A. COKER, DEPUTY SECRETARY (CIVIL AVIATION) AND FMG OFFICIAL WHO SUPERVISES AIR TRANSPORT NEGOTIATIONS TO MENTION THAT DEPARTMENT FORWARDING THROUGH EMBASSY COPY OF STANDARD U.S. AIR AGREEMENT FOR FMG'S STUDY AS REQUESTED IN FMG'S DIPLOMATIC NOTE OF 26 AUG 76 (REFS A AND B). TAKING OPPORTUNITY OF VISIT, EMBOFF ASKED WHAT TIMETABLE NIGERIA ENVISIONED FOR DISCUSSIONS. COKER SAID THAT BECAUSE OF INTRA-FMG COORDINATION REQUIREMENTS AND ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES (UNNAMED), NIGERIA WOULD NOT BE READY FOR U.S. NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE DECEMBER 76 OR EARLY 1977. NIGERIAN TEAM TYPICALLY COMPOSED OF ABOUT SIX PERSONS INCLUDING REPS FROM MINISTRIES OF CIVIL AIR, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, JUSTICE, AND NIGERIA AIRWAYS. INPUTS FROM ALL THESE QUARTERS MUST BE SYNTHESIZED BEFORE FMG BARGAINING POSITION FINAL.

2. EMBOFF ASKED WHETHER NIGERIA HAD SPECIFIC GOALS IN MIND FOR AN AIR TRANSPORT AGREEMENT. COKER SAID FMG MOST INTERESTED IN "FORMALIZING" AIR TRANSPORT RELATIONS WITH U.S. (THUS REPLACING CURRENT OPERATING PERMIT ARRANGEMENT). OTHER POINTS COULD ALSO BE DISCUSSED, BUT U.S. SHOULD NOT FEAR DETERIORATION OF PRESENT POSITION. IN RESPONSE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EMBOFF QUESTION, COKER CONCEDED PAN AM CARGO FREQUENCY AND

FOURTH PASSENGER FREQUENCY WOULD BE REASONABLE ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, NIGERIA AIRWAYS INTENDS TO ACQUIRE NEW INTERCONTINENTAL AIRCRAFT (DC-10S AND 747-SPS) AND COULD BE EXPECTED TO PUSH FOR FREQUENCIES TO NEW YORK THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY SAME NUMBER AS PAN AM'S LAGOS FREQUENCIES. (EMBASSY INFORMED BY NIGERIA AIRWAYS GENERAL MANAGER THAT AIRLINE WILL NOT HAVE TECHNICAL CAPACITY FOR NEW YORK FREQUENCY BEFORE 1978.)

3. COMMENT: COKER WAS RELAXED AND IN GOOD HUMOR AND WHILE HE WAS PURPOSELY VAGUE ON SPECIFICS, HE SEEMED TO WELCOME EMBASSY INTEREST. WE BELIEVE NIGERIA PRIMARILY SEEKS ACTUAL CONCLUSION OF AN AIR AGREEMENT WITH U.S. THUS UNDERSCORING COUNTRY'S ARRIVAL AS AN IMPORTANT AFRICAN POWER. DETAILS OF AGREEMENT IMPORTANT BUT OF LESSER CONCERN TO FMG.
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